



4 PART MINI · S E R I E S

DON MCGREGOR

GENE COLAN

\$1.25
\$1.50 CAN
MAY 1984
NO. 4

NATHANIEL DUSK

PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

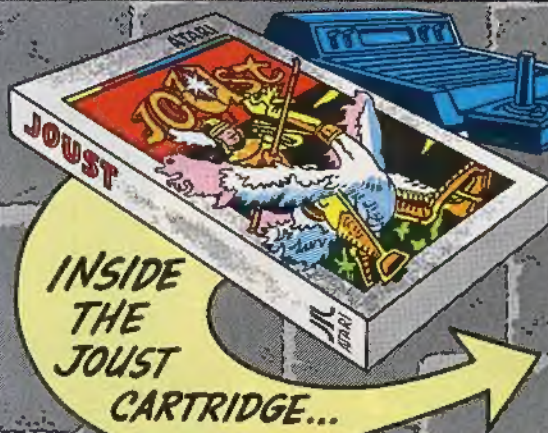


COLAN &
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ATARI®
PRESENTS

JOUST

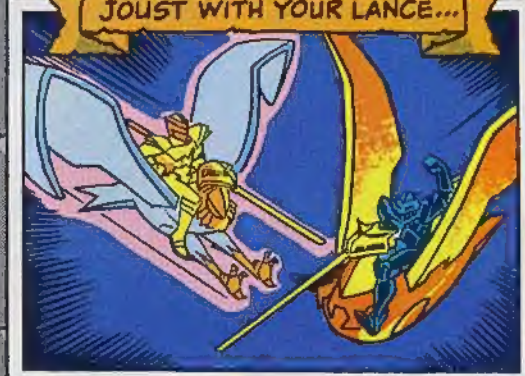
Another smash arcade hit brought home only by Atari for use with the ATARI® 2600™ Game, Sears Video Arcade® systems and versions exclusively for the ATARI 5200™ SuperSystem and all ATARI Home Computers.



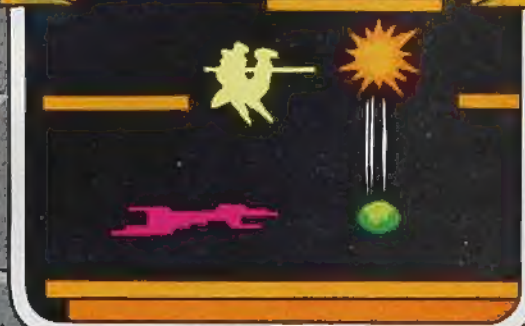
LONG AGO, IN THE DISTANT FUTURE, THERE'S A PLACE WHERE EVIL KNIGHTS JOUST UPON BEASTS OF THE AIR.



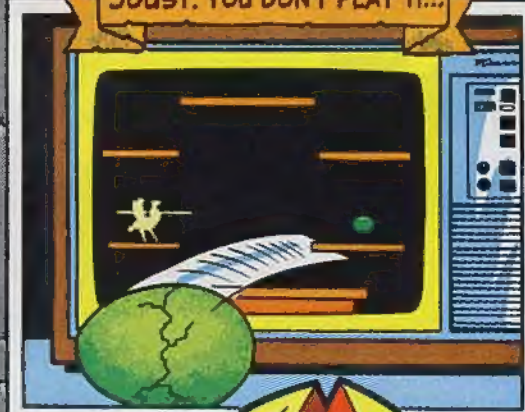
WHERE YOU MUST FLY, JOUST WITH YOUR LANCE...



...AND RETRIEVE THE ENEMY'S EGG BEFORE IT TRANSFORMS INTO ITS FORMER SELF.



JOUST. YOU DON'T PLAY IT...



...YOU LIVE IT!



JOUST

ATARI®

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NATHANIEL DUSK

LOVERS DIE AT DUSK

PART 4

CREATED AND WRITTEN BY
DON MCGREGOR
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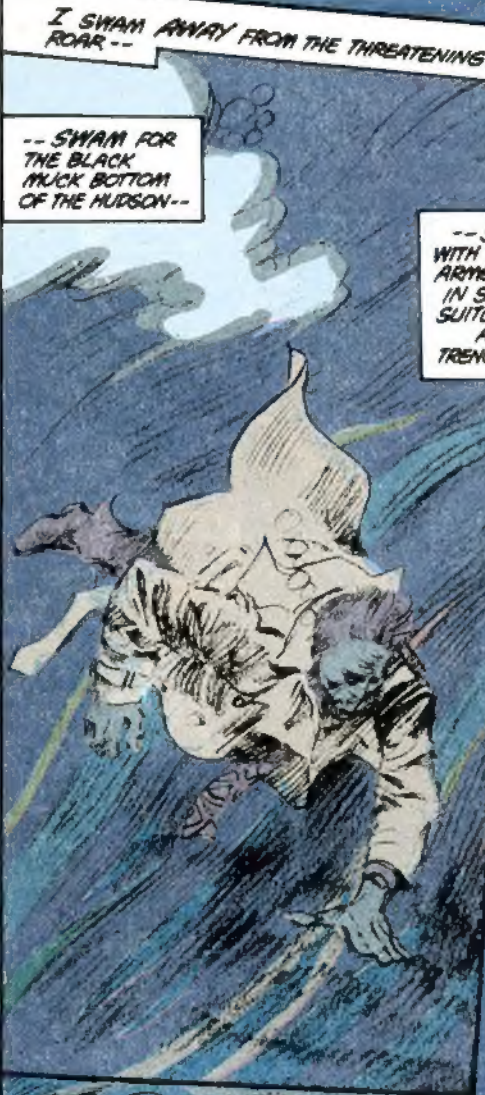
THE METAL SCREWS
OF THE STATEN
ISLAND FERRY RIPPED
THE DARK WATER WITH
A FEROCIOUS
SOUND.

I COULD SEE
THE SHAPE OF
THE SCREWS
DIMLY, AS IF THEY
WEREN'T QUITE
REAL AND
COULDN'T SLICE
THROUGH A
HUMAN BEING.

THE BLADES CHURNED WATER
ACROSS MY FACE AND UP
MY NOSTRILS.

I WONDERED IF THE BLADES WOULD MAKE
A DIFFERENT SOUND IF THEY RIPPED INTO
MY FLESH AND SCORED BONE.

I WONDERED IF ANYBODY ON BOARD THE FERRY, ENJOYING
THE NIGHT RIDE AND BRISK FEBRUARY AIR, WOULD NOTICE
THEY HAD BUMPED INTO SOMETHINGS IN THE DARK.



I SWAM AWAY FROM THE THREATENING
ROAR--

-- SWAM FOR
THE BLACK
MUCK BOTTOM
OF THE HUDSON--

-- SWAM
WITH TIRED
ARMS MIRED
IN SHIRT,
SUITCOAT,
AND
TRENCHCOAT.

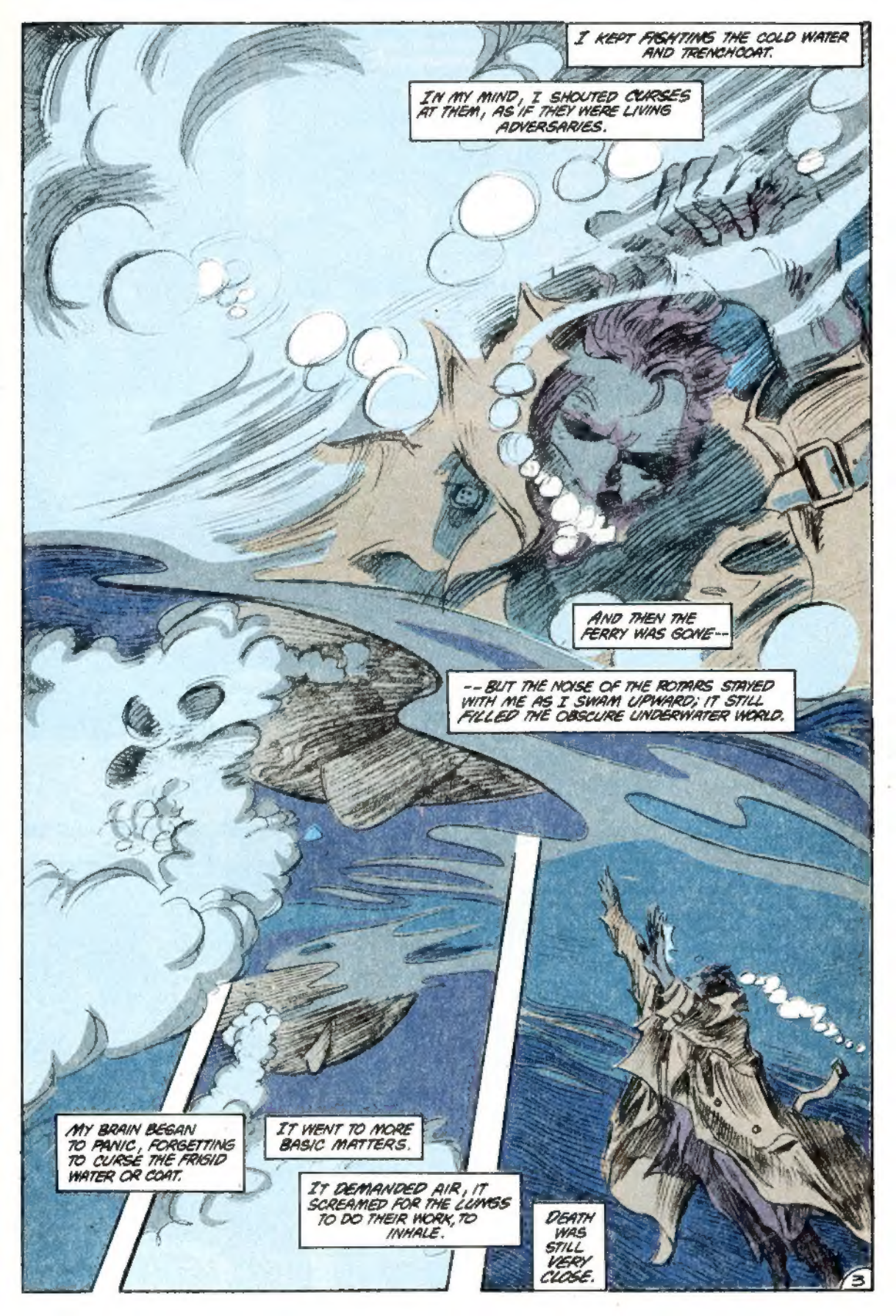
GREAT
SWIMMING
APPAREL.

I KICKED
DOWNWARD.
THE COAT
SEEMED TO
IMPRISON
MY LEGS.

THE RUSH OF THE CHURNING
SCREWS SEEMED LOUDER.

I WAS SURE
THEY WOULD
SLICE THROUGH
HAIR AND SKULL
INTO THE CENTER
OF MY BRAIN.

IT WAS NOT THE
KIND OF DEATH
I HAD EVER
IMAGINED FOR
MYSELF IN THOSE
LONELY, MORTAL
MOMENTS WHEN
ONE REALIZES ONE
TRULY WILL DIE,
AS ALL HUMANS
HAVE BEFORE ONE.

A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a brown trench coat, is shown swimming underwater. He is holding a large, complex mechanical device with a circular dial and various pipes. Bubbles are rising around him. In the background, a large, dark, winged creature is visible. The scene is depicted in a comic book style with bold lines and a blue color palette.

I KEPT FIGHTING THE COLD WATER
AND TRENCHCOAT.

IN MY MIND, I SHOUTED CURSES
AT THEM, AS IF THEY WERE LIVING
ADVERSARIES.

AND THEN THE
FERRY WAS GONE---

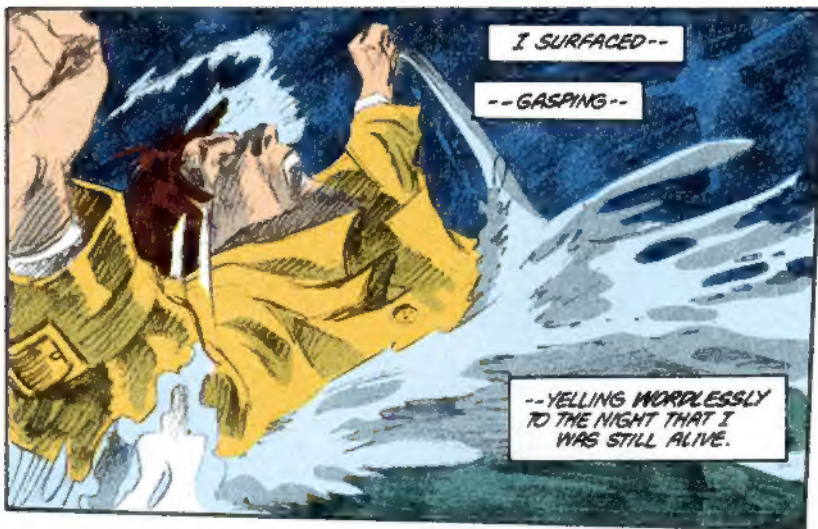
-- BUT THE NOISE OF THE ROTARS STAYED
WITH ME AS I SWAM UPWARD; IT STILL
FILLED THE OBSCURE UNDERWATER WORLD.

MY BRAIN BEGAN
TO PANIC, FORGETTING
TO CURSE THE FRIGID
WATER OR COAT.

IT WENT TO MORE
BASIC MATTERS.

IT DEMANDED AIR, IT
SCREAMED FOR THE LUNGS
TO DO THEIR WORK, TO
INHALE.

DEATH
WAS
STILL
VERY
CLOSE.



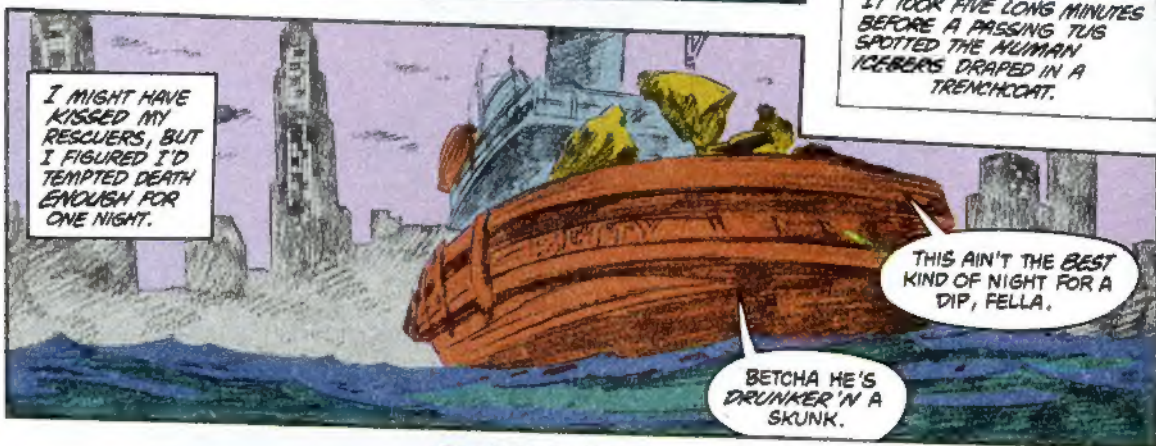
I SURFACED--

--GASPING--

--YELLING WORDLESSLY
TO THE NIGHT THAT I
WAS STILL ALIVE.



IT TOOK FIVE LONG MINUTES
BEFORE A PASSING TUG
SPOTTED THE HUMAN
ICEBERG DRAPED IN A
TRENCHCOAT.



I MIGHT HAVE
KISSED MY
RESCUERS, BUT
I FIGURED I'D
TEMPTED DEATH
ENOUGH FOR
ONE NIGHT.

THIS AIN'T THE BEST
KIND OF NIGHT FOR A
DIP, FELLA.

BETCHA HE'S
DRUNKER 'N A
SKUNK.

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 4, 1934

MY OFFICE ALMOST SEEMED WARM AND COZY BY COMPARISON WITH THE RIVER, HOME-SWEET-HOME FOR NATHANIEL DUSK. THE ROACHES DIDN'T SEEM HAPPY TO SEE ME.

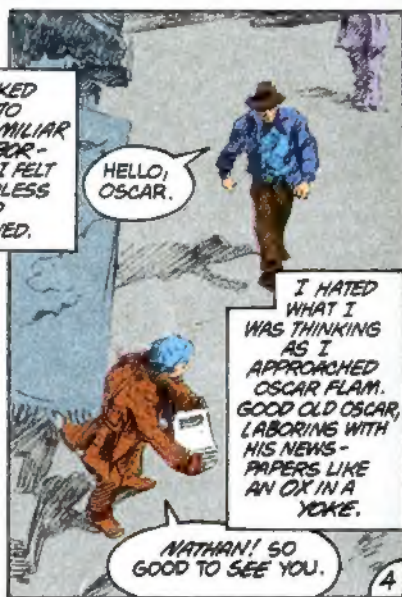


I CHANGED CLOTHES,
SWITCHED INTO MY
FLIGHT JACKET.



I FELT AS BLEAK AS THE RIVER
I'D JUST LEFT.

I WALKED
OUT INTO
THE FAMILIAR
NEIGHBOR-
HOOD. I FELT
FRIENDLESS
AND
BETRAYED.



HELLO,
OSCAR.

I HATED
WHAT I
WAS THINKING
AS I
APPROACHED
OSCAR FLAM.
GOOD OLD OSCAR,
LABORING WITH
HIS NEWS-
PAPERS LIKE
AN OX IN A
YOKE.

NATHAN! SO
GOOD TO SEE YOU.

that's what people will be saying after YOU introduce them to GRIT for the first time.

Gain practical business experience

Please send me all the details and..... copies
Each week to start my own GRIT route.

NC 34

Under his register now down with
with us in 18 years or older. 12
with us older in the dates of U
D8. L1, M3. W4 V5 X6
13. 14. 15 and 16

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PARENTS' SIGNATURE:



MAYBE I SHOULD ASK
YOU HOW YOUR SON IS.



YES, YOU ALWAYS
ASK. I APPRECIATE
THAT. I'M SO GLAD
YOU'RE...



WHAT, OSCAR?

ALIVE?

DAILY MIRROR
2 CENTS



TELL ME WHY, OSCAR! TELL ME BEFORE I'M PAST
WANTING TO HEAR WHY!

NATHAN! WHAT
ARE YOU DOING? THIS
IS CRAZINESS...



COME ON, OSCAR!
SOMEONE HAD TO
BE KEEPING TABS
ON ME. I WAS
COMING TO MY
OFFICE CAREFUL,
LOOKING FOR
STRANGE
FACES--

--YET EVERY-
TIME I GOT HERE
AND SAW YOU, TEN
MINUTES LATER I
HAD KILLERS KNOCK-
ING AT MY DOOR OR
COMING THROUGH
THE WINDOWS.



AND THEN THERE WAS ARTHUR
SQUIRE, THE PULP PUBLISHER,
REMEMBER? THE GUY YOU DIDN'T
KNOW. I TOLD YOU I WAS GOING
TO SEE HIM.

FUNNY
HOW THOSE
HITMEN
GOT THERE
AHEAD
OF ME.

OR MAYBE
NOT SO FUNNY.
YOU CALLED
THEM, TOLD
THEM WHERE
I WAS GOING.



I HAD TO, NATE.

--I
HAD
TO.

TO LIVE
IN THIS
CITY... TO
WORK
IN THIS
CITY--

WHAT ARE
YOU TALKING
ABOUT?

THE MOBS, THEY WANT TO BE LEGITIMATE NOW... WHAT THEY DO IS AUCTION OFF SPACE... YOU WANT TO HAVE A MAGAZINE STAND IN A PRIME SPOT ON THIS ISLAND... YOU PAY SOMEONE.

YOU WANT YOUR MAGAZINE SOLD IN THIS CITY... YOU PAY SOMEONE... OR IT DON'T GET DISTRIBUTED.



ARTHUR SQUIRE, I DON'T KNOW HIM FROM ADAM... BUT ALL NEW PUBLISHERS, THEY PAY... YOU PAY OR YOU DON'T SELL YOUR PRODUCT. AND IF YOU'RE A NEWS-STAND DEALER, YOU DON'T GET A PLACE TO SET UP YOUR STAND.



SO THEY COME, THEY TELL ME THEY BREAK MY FINGERS... THEY DESTROY MY STAND. I COME TO AMERICA BECAUSE IT IS A LAND OF PROMISE... OF DREAMS... AND THEY THREATEN TO BREAK MY FINGERS. ALL I WANT IS TO SELL MAGAZINES. I GOT A SON WITH POLIO, I CAN'T FIGURE YET HOW TO PAY THE DOCTORS.



I LIKE YOU, NATE... ALWAYS YOU ASK, HOW'S ALBERT... IT CUTS MY HEART TO HAVE TO CALL THEM... BUT I DID.

TEN MINUTES AGO I TOLD THEM YOU WERE BACK.

WHAT COULD I DO, NATE? NOT TELL? LOSE EVERYTHING?



WHAT'S A MAN TO DO?

ITALIAN HARLEM WAS QUIET IN THE EARLY SUNDAY MORNING. THE CHURCH BELLS CALLED OUT OVER THE STREETS, LIKE A RULER SUMMONING HIS SUBJECTS.



THE SOUND MADE ME WANT TO JOIN THE PARISHIONERS, TO ENTER THE COMFORTING DARKNESS OF THE CHURCH, WHERE THERE WAS NO POVERTY--



--WHERE THE ONLY MANIFEST VIOLENT DEATHS WERE SCULPTED IMAGES OF JESUS NAILED ON A CROSS.



MRS. GULINO CAME BACK TO HER TENEMENT, DRESSED IN HER SUNDAY BEST. THE CHURCH AND THE GROCERY STORE AND MAYBE THE DOCTOR WERE THE ONLY PLACES SHE WENT.



MRS. GULINO?

SHE WAS A LITTLE BIT CRAZY. YOU COULD SEE IT IN HER MANNERISMS.



YEEESSS?

LIFE HAD BECOME TOO OBSCURE FOR HER; SHE DID NOT UNDERSTAND IT ANY LONGER.



I HAVE TO SEE YOU.

I KNEW YOUR DAUGHTER, JOYCE.

THE DEATH OF HER HUSBAND, AND THE LOSS OF HER DAUGHTER AND GRANDCHILDREN, HAD LEFT HER ISOLATED, WITH ONLY MINIMAL CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD.



JOYCE? YOU SEE MY JOYCE? FIVE YEARS I DON'T SEE HER... OR MY GRANDCHILDREN... I HAVE TWO OF THEM, YOU KNOW.

YES.

I KNOW THEM.

YOU? YOU KNOW THEM?

A GRANDMOTHER DOESN'T GET TO SEE HER OWN GRANDCHILDREN, BUT YOU...



MRS. GULINO... THERE'S NO EASY WAY TO SAY THIS... YOUR DAUGHTER...



MOTHER OF GOD! YOU TELL ME! SHE IS HURT, YES?

SHE IS DEAD, MRS. GULINO. I WAS AT HER FUNERAL.



NO! BLESSED MARY, DON'T SAY SUCH THINGS!

IT WAS HIM, WASN'T IT? HE KILLED HER! SUCH A BEAUTIFUL GIRL! SUCH A GOOD GIRL, MY JOYCE! HE TOOK HER LIFE AND RUINED IT!

YOU MEAN HER HUSBAND?

HIS NAME IS NOT SPOKEN IN THIS HOUSE.

YOUR DAUGHTER WAS MURDERED, MRS GULINO I WANT THE PEOPLE WHO DID IT!

I DO NOT WANT THEM TO WALK AWAY FROM THIS AND LIVE THEIR LIVES AS IF NOTHING HAPPENED.

JOYCE TOLD ME HER HUSBAND WAS DEAD, BUT I FOUND A PHOTO ALBUM WITH PICTURES CUT UP.

SOMEONE HAD BEEN CUT OUT OF THE PICTURES... ONLY YOUR GRAND-CHILDREN WERE LEFT.

NO ONE CUTS OUT PICTURES OF A HUSBAND LOST THROUGH DEATH--

--BUT IF THERE WAS A DIVORCE...

NO DIVORCE! THE CHURCH WOULD NOT PERMIT SUCH A THING! A WIFE IS BOUND TO HER HUSBAND! THE VOWS ARE SACRED!

BUT HE WAS SUCH A **BAD MAN**. HE WAS A **CROOK**... WHAT YOU CALL A **MOBSTER**.

THIS SHE DID NOT KNOW UNTIL AFTER SHE GAVE HIM A **DAUGHTER**.

HE WENT WITH **MANY WOMEN** AND LEFT HIS WIFE'S BED **EMPTY** AFTER SHE BORE HIM TWO **BEAUTIFUL BABIES**.

HE **BEAT** HER!

THIS I SEE WITH MY OWN TWO EYES! WHEN HE MARRIED HER, HE TOOK HER TO THIS BIG HOUSE IN **WESTCHESTER**.

SHE STAYED WITH HIM, MY JOYCE. SHE WAS A **GOOD GIRL**... DEVOTED... FAITHFUL.

AND THEN SHE FOUND OUT... HE HAD A **TERRIBLE DISEASE**... HE GOT IT FROM THE **BUMS** HE WENT WITH OTHER THAN HIS OWN WIFE.

YOU KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING?

THEN SHE LEFT... THEN SHE TOOK THE **BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN** AND HID. SHE WOULD NOT TELL ME WHERE SHE HAD GONE SO HE COULD NOT **FORCE** ME TO TELL.

SHE SENT LETTERS WITH **NO RETURN ADDRESS**, TO LET HER MOTHER KNOW SHE WAS WELL, FOR SHE WAS A **GOOD GIRL**--

--AND GOD WILL **BLESS** HER, AS SURELY AS SATAN WILL WELCOME THIS... THIS **ANIMAL**!

I NEED HIS **NAME**, MRS. GULINO.

I SAID I WOULD NEVER SPEAK HIS NAME AGAIN, MAY THE **DEVIL** TAKE MY TONGUE.

I SAY IT **ONCE**... I HOPE IT PUTS THE **EVIL EYE** ON HIM

JOSEPH COSTILINO

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I agree to pay \$ _____ Twice Monthly or if monthly I will pay \$ _____

My Name _____ Rank _____

Complete Military Address _____
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APD or City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Social Security # _____ Discharge Date _____

Home Phone () _____
(Stateside)

Home Address _____
(Stateside)

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Sweetheart or Wife's Name _____

Her Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Send Merchandise to: _____

Me _____ Sweetheart or Wife _____ SIGNATURE _____

You may contact my employer for credit purposes.

Clip out — wrap finger — mark line at arrow point — insert with coupons.



Over 75 years of service.

These rings are uncon-
ditionally guaranteed.

You must be completely
satisfied or your
money refunded.

Merchandise enlarged
to show detail.

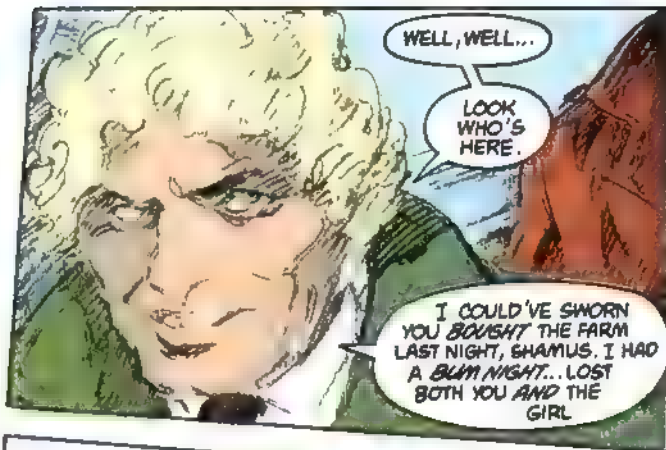
No interest.

No carrying charges.

THEY WERE WAITING FOR ME WHEN I STEPPED
BACK OUT INTO THE
SUNSHINE

BLONDIE.

AND
CADAVER
PICHANO.



WELL, WELL...

LOOK
WHO'S
HERE.

I COULD'VE SWORN
YOU BOUGHT THE FARM
LAST NIGHT, SHAMUS. I HAD
A BUM NIGHT... LOST
BOTH YOU AND THE
GIRL

MR COSTILINO...
HE HAS THE
OLD LADY'S
PLACE WATCHED.
IT'S LIKE AN
OLD HABIT
HE CAN'T GET
RID OF...
KEEPING
TABS ON
HER.

WE GOT
THE CALL
SOON AS
YOU
SHOWED
YOUR ASS.

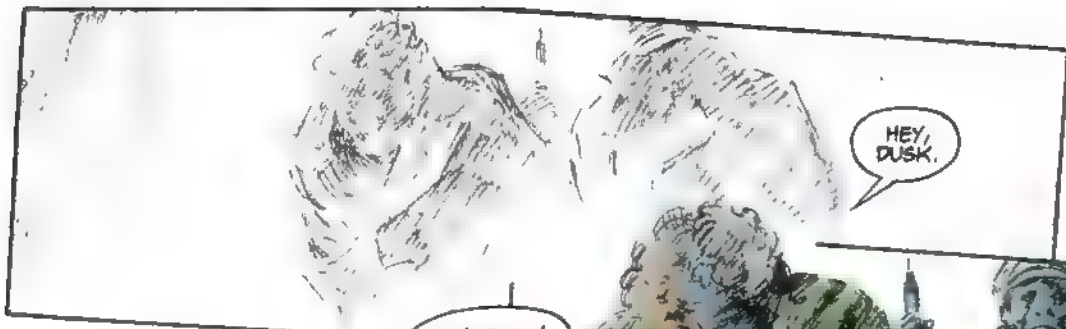
YOU DON'T DO ANYTHING DUMB,
OKAY? YOU CLIMB IN THE CAR
REAL QUIET, LIKE A CHURCH-
MOUSE, OKAY?

I REACHED
FOR HIS FACE;
I DIDN'T
THINK TWICE
ABOUT THE
ACTION.

I WAS GOING
TO TEAR THE
SMIRK OFF
THAT HAND-
SOME FACE.

I NEVER HEARD
CADAVER, I ONLY
FELT THE BLACKJACK
WHACK INTO THE
BACK OF MY HEAD,
TAKING STRANDS OF
BLOODED HAIR
WITH IT.

CADAVER HAD A HELLUVA WAY
OF COMMUNICATING.



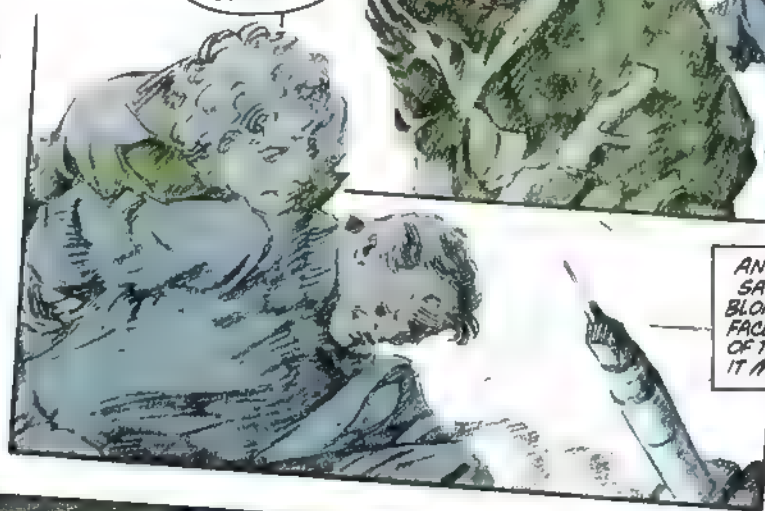
HEY,
DUSK.

DUH-USSK!
WAKE
UH-UP!

THE FIRST THING I
BECAME AWARE OF
WAS A MUSTY SMELL.
I WAS SURE THIS
MUST BE THE WAY
THE INSIDE OF A
COFFIN WOULD SMELL
AFTER SEVERAL YEARS
INTERMENT.

I HEARD A TAUNTING
VOICE; IT SEEMED TO
BELONG TO A BULLY
I HAD KNOWN IN MY
CHILDHOOD.

I WONDERED WHERE
I WAS. I WAS HAVING
TROUBLE REMEMBERING
WHO HIT ME.



AND THEN I
SAW THE
BLOND, SMILING
FACE AND NONE
OF THE REST OF
IT MATTERED.



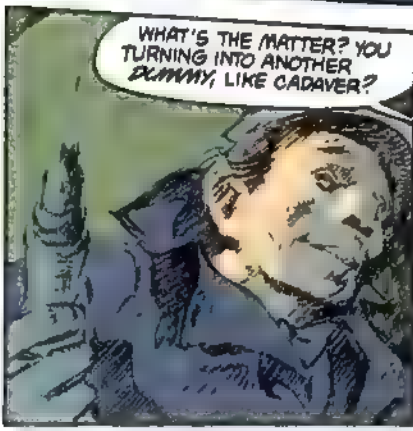
I HAD SEEN
JOYCE LYING
ON A BLOOD-
SPATTERED
SHEET. I
WOULD NEVER
FORGET THAT.

YOU SEE
THIS HERE,
SHAMUS?

KNOW
WHAT
CADAVER'S
HOLDING?



IT'S A SYRINGE. WANT TO GUESS
WHAT'S IN IT?



WHAT'S THE MATTER? YOU
TURNING INTO ANOTHER
DUMMY, LIKE CADAVER?

IT'S RAT POISON,
TOUGH GUY.

NOW WHAT WE'RE GOING
TO DO IS SHOOT THIS IN
YOUR ARM... THEN ME
AND CADAVER WILL LEAVE
YOU TO YOUR OWN DEVICES.

YOU CAN SCREAM LIKE
HELL... NO ONE'S GOING
TO HEAR YOU. THIS PLACE
IS BOARDED UP--

--CONDEMNED.



MAYBE THEY'LL FIND
YOUR BONES WHEN THEY
TEAR THIS PLACE DOWN.



CADAVER'S BONES...
HE WANTS TO MAKE SURE
YOU'RE AWAKE FOR
THIS --



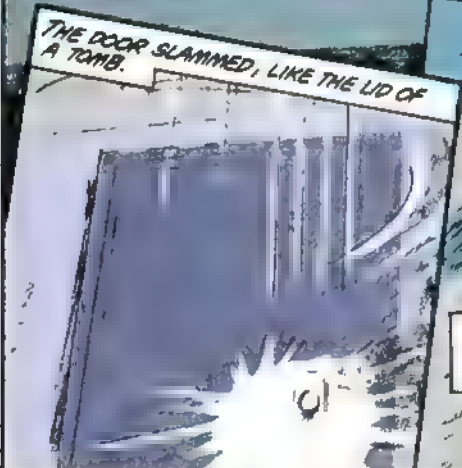
--SO YOU CAN GET
THE FULL BENEFIT
FROM THE POISON.



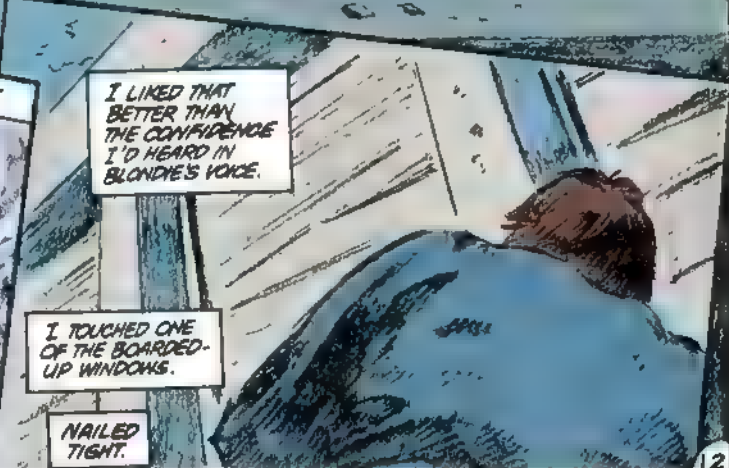
HEY,
SHAMUS--

I DO
GOOD
WORK--

--DON'T
I?



THE DOOR SLAMMED, LIKE THE LID OF
A TOMB.



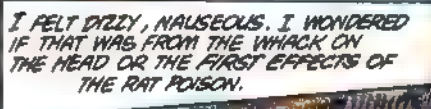
I LIKED THAT
BETTER THAN
THE CONFIDENCE
I'D HEARD IN
BLONDIE'S VOICE.

I TOUCHED ONE
OF THE BOARDED-
UP WINDOWS.

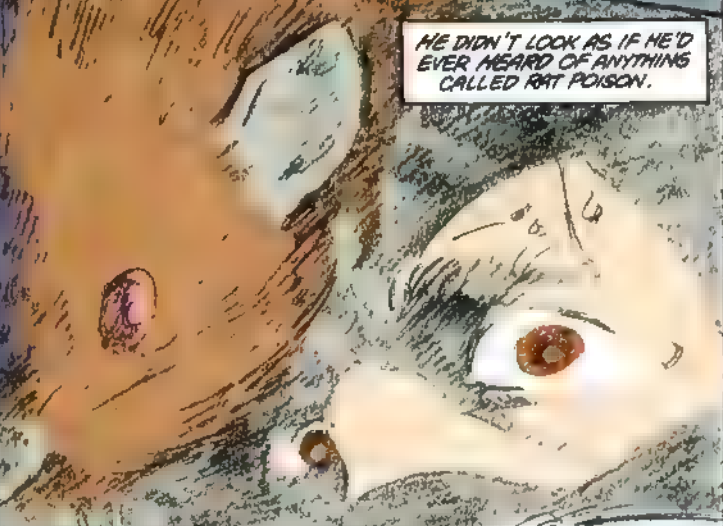
NAILED
TIGHT.



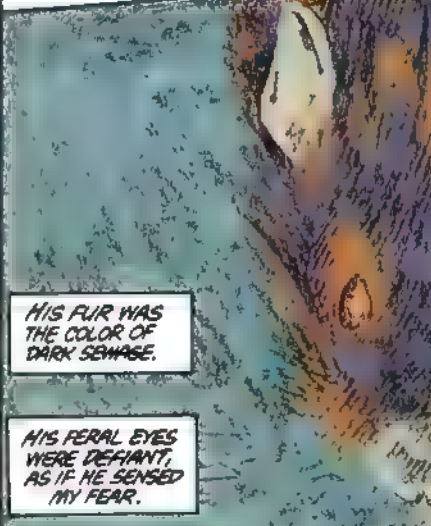
I STAGGERED TOWARD A LOOSE-FITTING DOOR. IT OPENED INTO A DIRTY BATHROOM WHOSE ONLY OCCUPANT WAS A LARGE RAT. HE STOOD GUARD OVER THE YELLOWISH-BROWN TOILET.



I FELT DIZZY, NAUSEOUS. I WONDERED IF THAT WAS FROM THE WHACK ON THE HEAD OR THE FIRST EFFECTS OF THE RAT POISON.

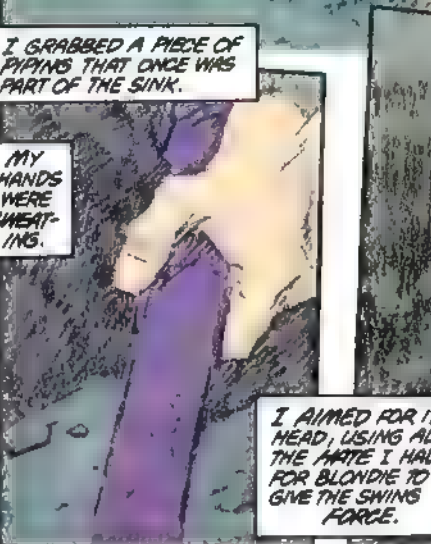


HE DIDN'T LOOK AS IF HE'D EVER HEARD OF ANYTHING CALLED RAT POISON.



HIS FUR WAS THE COLOR OF DARK SEWAGE.

HIS FERAL EYES WERE DEFIANT, AS IF HE SENSED MY FEAR.



I GRABBED A PIECE OF PIPING THAT ONCE WAS PART OF THE SINK.

MY HANDS WERE SWEATING.

I AIMED FOR ITS HEAD, USING ALL THE HATE I HAD FOR BLONDIE TO GIVE THE SWING FORCE.

I CRAWLED OVER THE RAT'S BLOOD, WHILE ITS TAIL STILL TWITCHED IN ITS DEATH THROES.

I HAD A SECOND'S SPECULATION ON HOW THE DINGY GRAY BRASSIERE MIGHT HAVE COME TO BE IN SUCH A PLACE AS I MADE IT MY TOURNIQUET.

ONCE THIS PLACE HAD PROBABLY BEEN A SWEAT-SHOP FILLED WITH WOMEN AT SEWING MACHINES, WOMEN TOILING OVER REAMS OF CLOTH FOR TWELVE TO SIXTEEN HOURS A DAY.

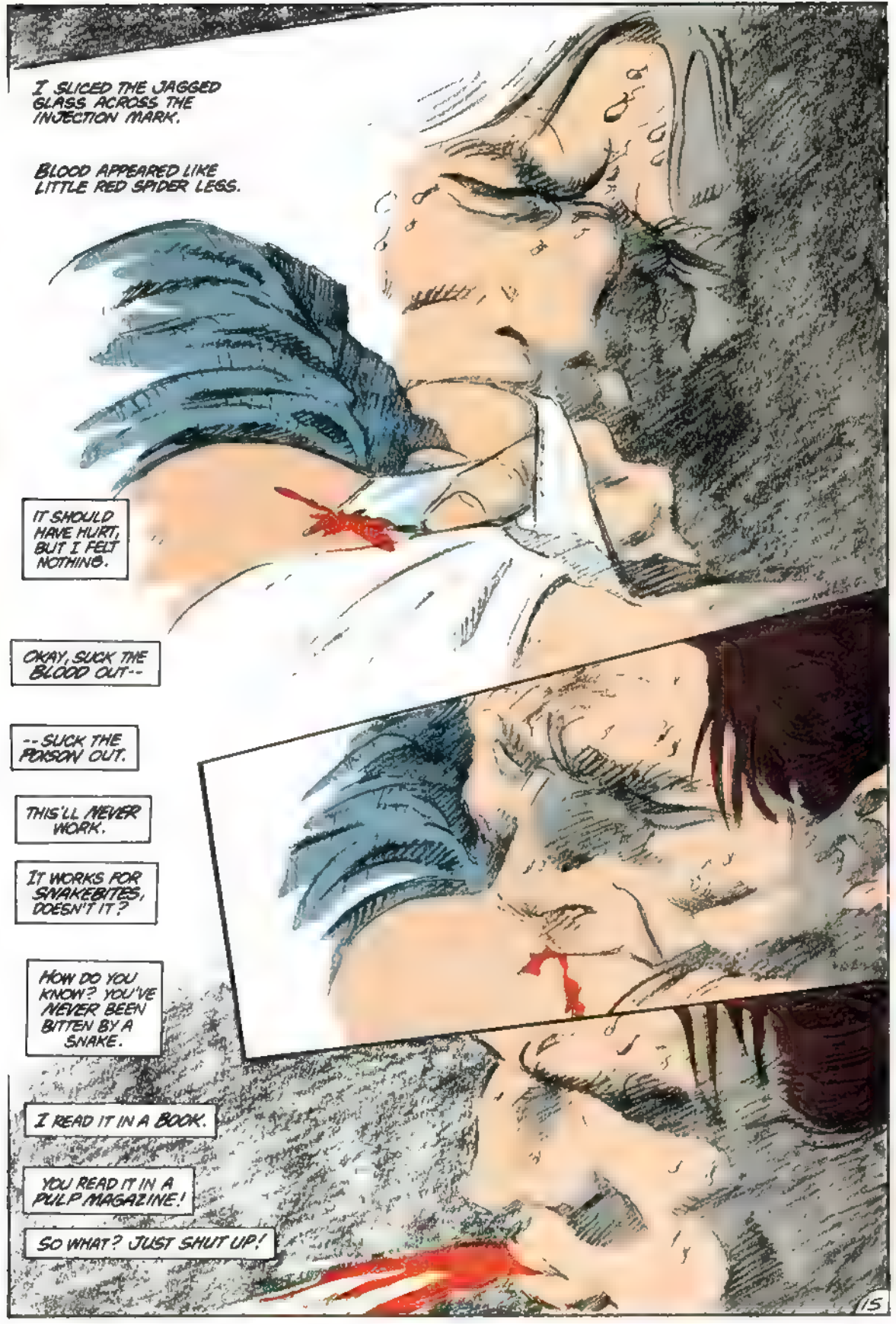
I LOOKED INTO THE CHEAP, DIRTY MIRROR.

I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE THE MAN LOOKING BACK OUT AT ME.

I BATTERED THE IMAGE INTO OBLIVION.

THE FLOW OF BLOOD TO MY HEART WAS SLOWED BY THE TOURNIQUET--

--NOW I HAD TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP.



I SLICED THE JAGGED
GLASS ACROSS THE
INJECTION MARK.

BLOOD APPEARED LIKE
LITTLE RED SPIDER LEGS.

IT SHOULD
HAVE HURT,
BUT I FELT
NOTHING.

OKAY, SUCK THE
BLOOD OUT--

-- SUCK THE
PERSON OUT.

THIS'LL NEVER
WORK.

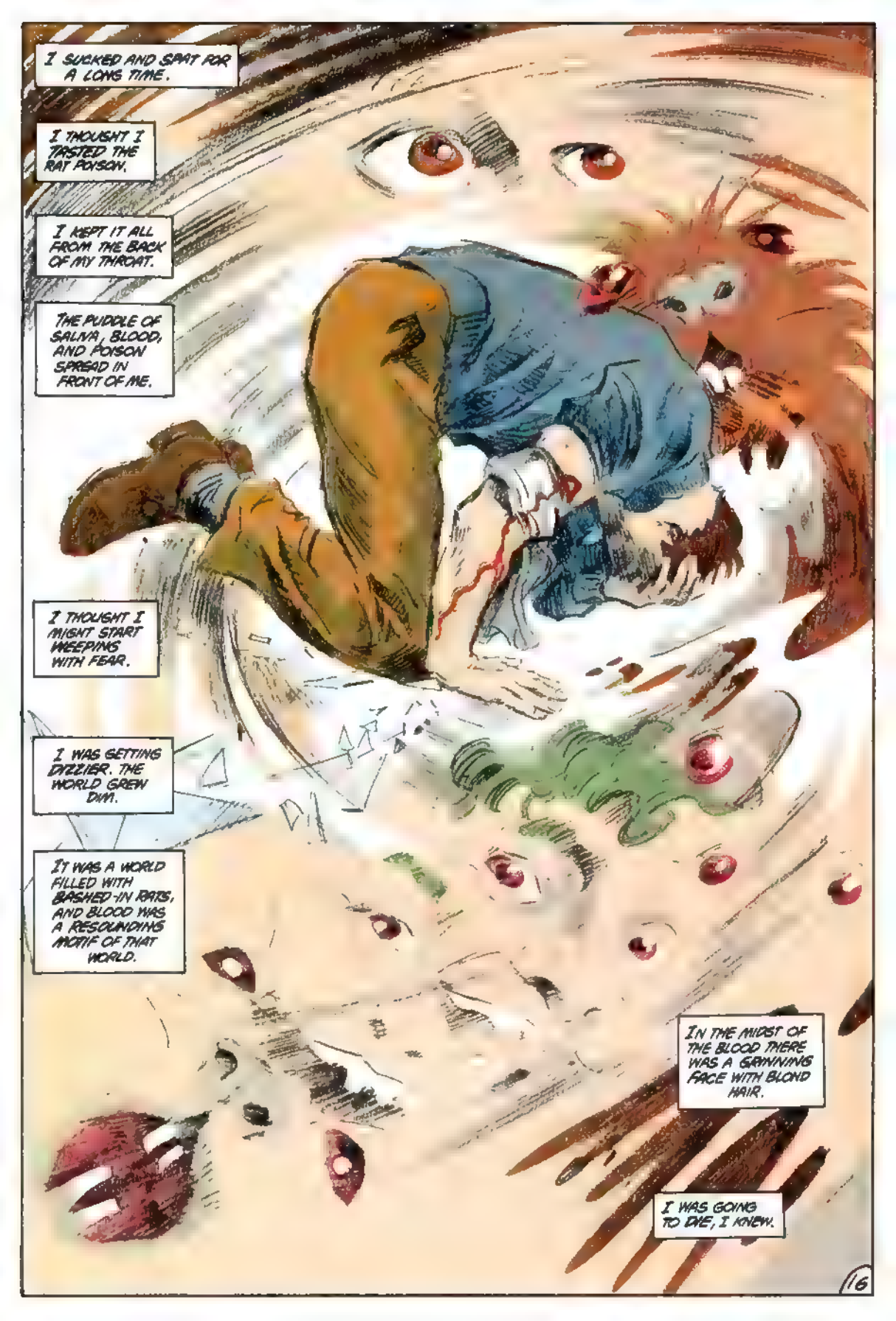
IT WORKS FOR
SNAKEBITES,
DOESN'T IT?

HOW DO YOU
KNOW? YOU'VE
NEVER BEEN
BITTEN BY A
SNAKE.

I READ IT IN A BOOK.

YOU READ IT IN A
PULP MAGAZINE!

SO WHAT? JUST SHUT UP!



I SUCKED AND SPAT FOR
A LONG TIME.

I THOUGHT I
TASTED THE
RAT POISON.

I KEPT IT ALL
FROM THE BACK
OF MY THROAT.

THE PUDDLE OF
SALIVA, BLOOD,
AND POISON
SPREAD IN
FRONT OF ME.

I THOUGHT I
MIGHT START
WEEPING
WITH FEAR.

I WAS GETTING
DIZZIER. THE
WORLD GREW
DIM.

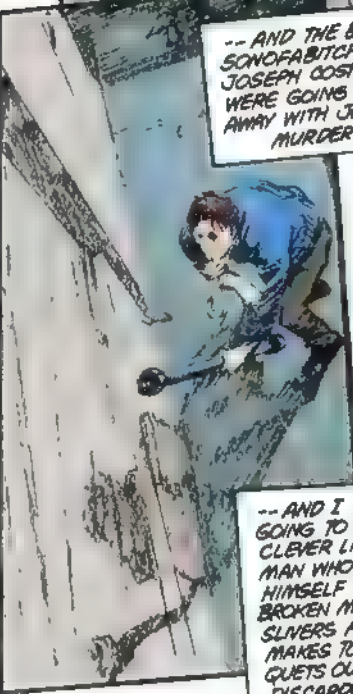
IT WAS A WORLD
FILLED WITH
BASHED-IN RATS,
AND BLOOD WAS
A RESOUNDING
MOTIF OF THAT
WORLD.

IN THE MIST OF
THE BLOOD THERE
WAS A GRINNING
FACE WITH BLOND
HAIR.

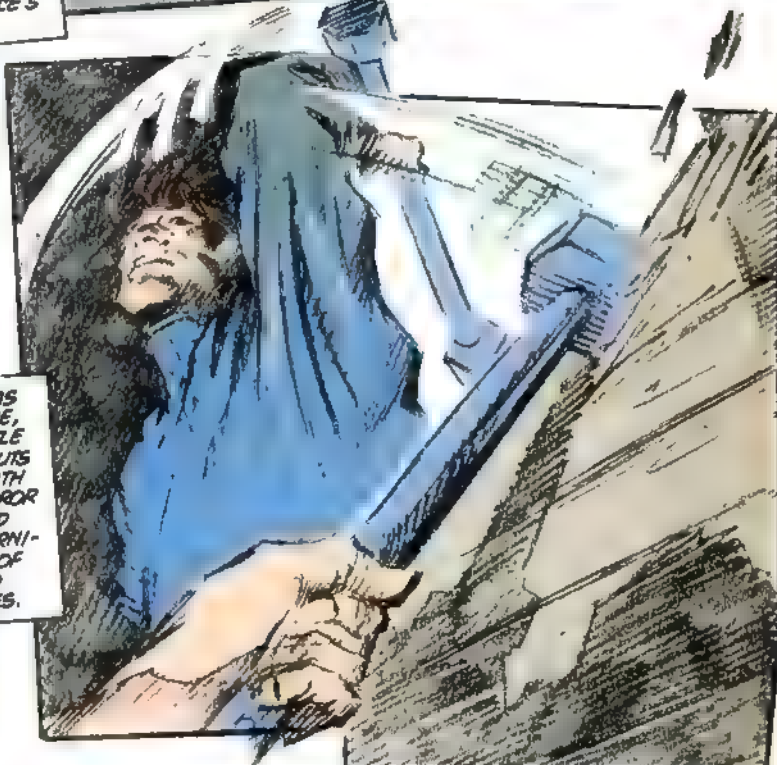
I WAS GOING
TO DIE, I KNEW.



I WAS GOING TO LIE BESIDE
THE RAT AND HEAVE UP MY
INSIDES ONTO THE DUSTY
FLOORBOARDS--



-- AND THE BLOND
SONOFABITCH AND
JOSEPH COSTILINO
WERE GOING TO GET
AWAY WITH JOYCE'S
MURDER--

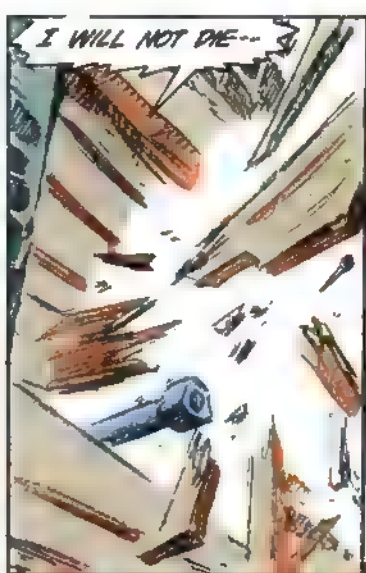


-- AND I WAS
GOING TO DIE,
CLEVER LITTLE
MAN WHO CUTS
HIMSELF WITH
BROKEN MIRROR
SLIVERS AND
MAKES Tourni-
quets OUT OF
DISCARDED
BRASSIERES.

I CURSED AT THE BOARDED
WINDOWS, THEN I HIT THEM
WITH THE PIPE.

I HIT THE BOARDS, AGAIN AND AGAIN, HITTING
THEM AS IF THEY WERE THE BLOND MAN'S FACE.
I WAS CRYING.

I STARTED SCREAMING EACH
TIME I HIT THE BOARDS.



I WILL NOT DIE...



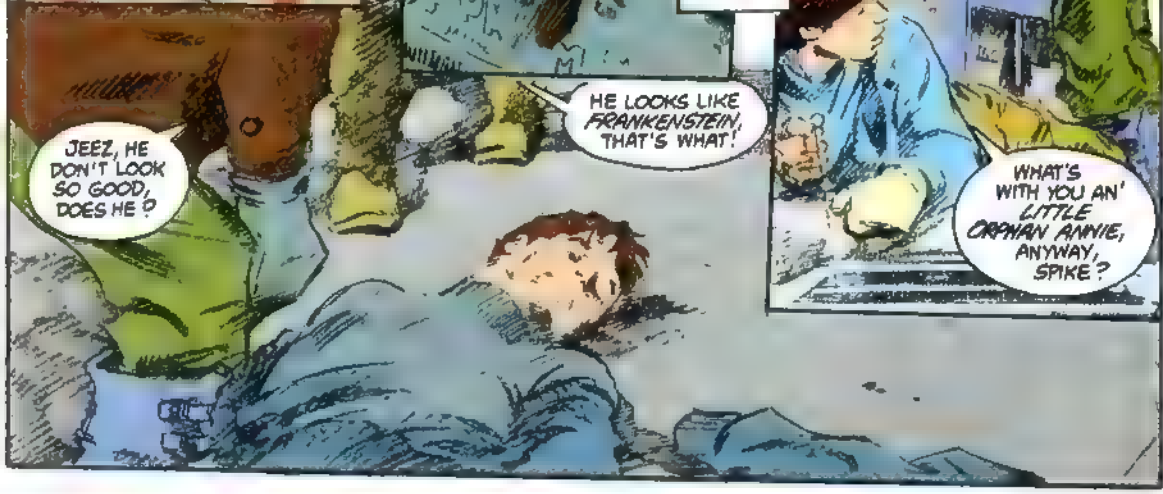
NOT
HERE!

IT WAS A
LONG DROP.
I DIDN'T
GIVE A
DAMN.

I NEVER
FELT THE
CEMENT
WHEN I
HIT.



LEAPIN'
LIZARDS!



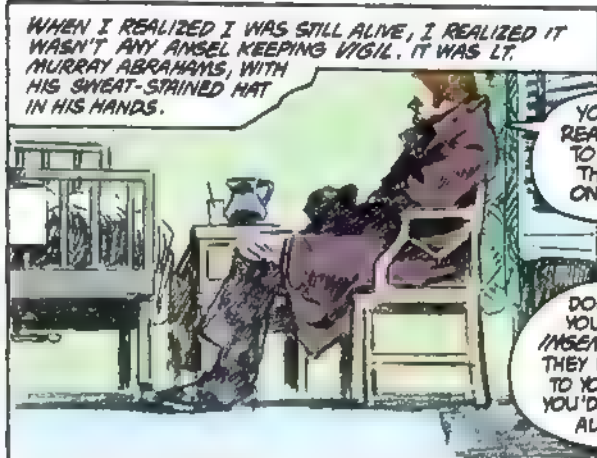
JEEZ, HE
DON'T LOOK
SO GOOD,
DOES HE?

HE LOOKS LIKE
FRANKENSTEIN,
THAT'S WHAT!

WHAT'S
WITH YOU AN'
LITTLE
ORPHAN ANNIE,
ANYWAY,
SPIKE?

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 8, 1934

THE DAYS PASSED IN A BLUR, IN AND OUT OF FOCUS. MOST OF THE TIME I WASN'T AWARE I WAS ALIVE. SOMETIMES IT SEEMED LIKE SOMEONE WAS WATCHING ME. I FIGURED IT WAS THE ANGEL OF DEATH.



WHEN I REALIZED I WAS STILL ALIVE, I REALIZED IT WASN'T ANY ANGEL KEEPING VIGIL. IT WAS LT. MURRAY ABRAHAM, WITH HIS SWEAT-STAINED HAT IN HIS HANDS.



YOU CAME
REAL CLOSE
TO BUYING
THE BIG
ONE, NATE.

DOCTORS SAID
YOU USED
INGENUITY, BUT IF
THEY HADN'T GOTTEN
TO YOU IN TIME,
YOU'D'VE BEEN DEAD
ALL THE SAME.

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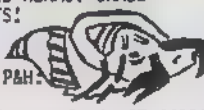
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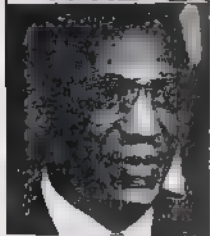
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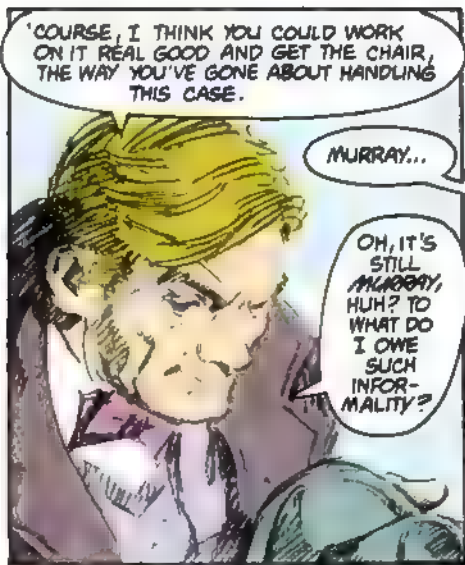
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'COURSE, I THINK YOU COULD WORK ON IT REAL GOOD AND GET THE CHAIR, THE WAY YOU'VE GONE ABOUT HANDLING THIS CASE.

MURRAY...

OH, IT'S STILL MURRAY, HUH? TO WHAT DO I OWE SUCH INFORMALITY?



YOU STILL WANT TO BE IN MY GOOD GRACES. YOU THINK I'LL KEEP YOUR ASS FROM BEING FRIED.

I WANT YOU TO SEE JOYCE'S MOTHER.

I THOUGHT SHE WAS DEAD.



SHE'S ALIVE. SHE'S IN ITALIAN HARLEM. THEN I WANT YOU TO LOCATE A WHORE WHO WORKS FOR JOSEPH COSTILINO'S BOYS... SHE'S A MATERIAL WITNESS.

HER NAME'S SHERRY D'ANGELO, AND THE TWO OF THEM CAN GIVE YOU THE REAL GOODS

TALK TO OSCAR FLAM, TOO. TELL HIM I SENT YOU.



TELL HIM HE ASKED ME, "WHAT'S A MAN TO DO?"

TELL HIM I SAID, "STAND UP."

BUT DON'T LEAN ON HIM, MURRAY. HE'S A MAN BEEN LEANED ON ENOUGH.

I PULLED THE COVERS ASIDE, FEELING ANGUISH. A PAIN UNDER MY RIBS LURCHED UP INTO MY CHEST.



MY LEGS WEREN'T POSITIVE THEY COULD CARRY MY WEIGHT.



IT REMINDED ME OF BEATEN OLD MEN I'D SEEN IN THE PARK, MEN WHO COULD NOT MOVE WITHOUT PAIN, MEN WHO HADN'T TAKEN CARE OF THEMSELVES AND LOOKED AS IF DEATH WOULD BE AN ESCAPE.



I HADN'T THOUGHT ABOUT THEM TOO COMPARISONATELY.

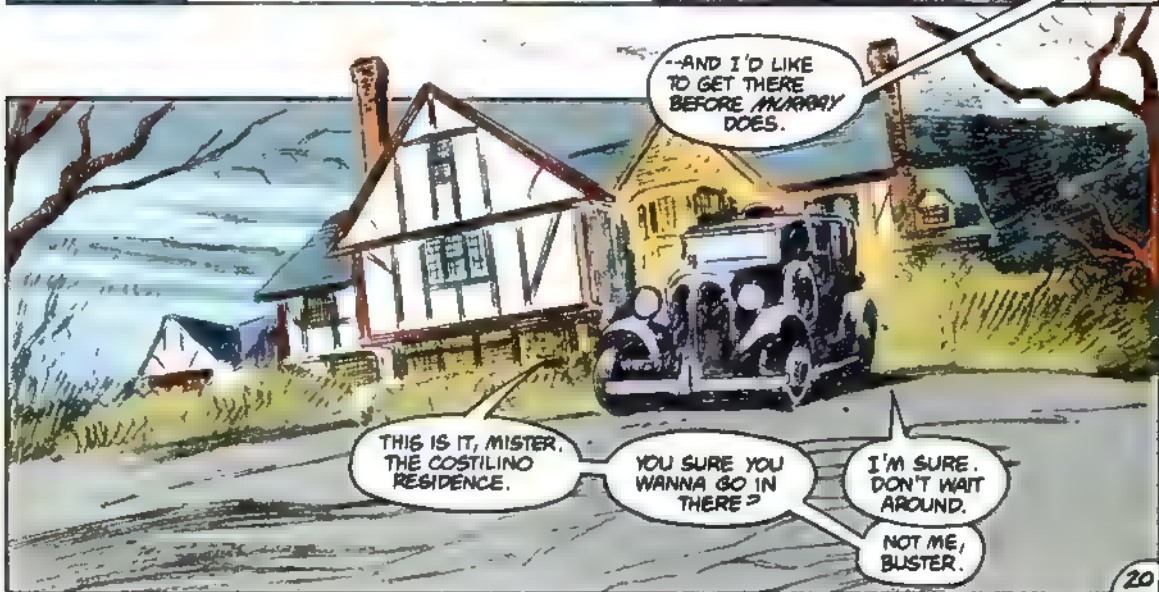
I WONDERED IF I'D END UP SO INFIRM AT SIXTY.

GOOD AFTERNOON.

THANKS FOR HOLDING THE DOOR OPEN FOR AN OLD MAN.

I'D LIKE TO STAY, BUT I'VE GOT ONE LAST STOP TO MAKE--

--AND I'D LIKE TO GET THERE BEFORE MURRAY DOES.



THIS IS IT, MISTER. THE COSTILINO RESIDENCE.

YOU SURE YOU WANNA GO IN THERE?

I'M SURE. DON'T WAIT AROUND.

NOT ME, BUSTER.

MY BODY PROTESTED, BUT I
KICKED THE GODDAMNED DOOR
IN ANYWAY.



PROBABLY NOT THE PROPER
ETIQUETTE, NOT THAT JOSEPH
COSTILINO WOULD EVER
NOTICE.



YOU!

YOU
SEWAGE!

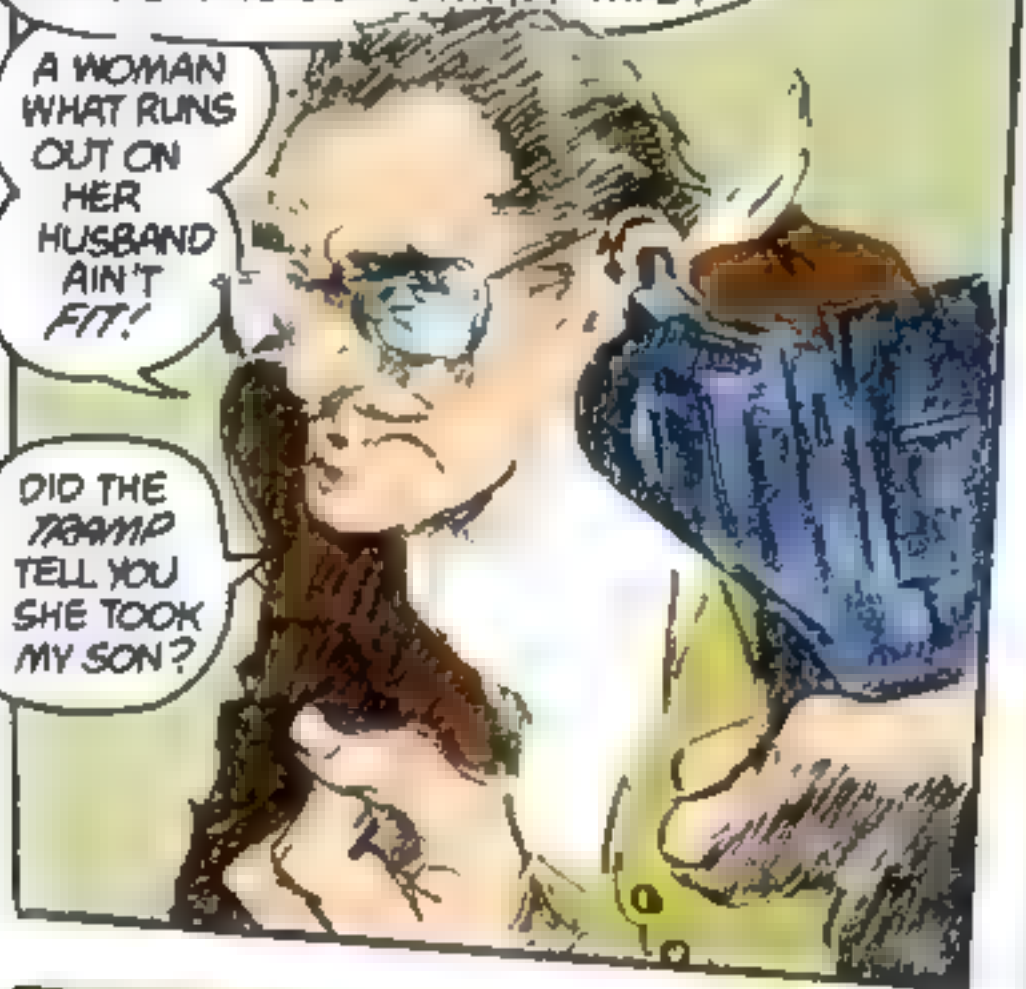
WHAT'RE
YOU DOING
IN MY
HOME?

I CAME TO
SAY "GOOD-
BYE."

YOU THINK YOU'RE
GONNA WALK OUT OF HERE... AFTER
YOU WENT TO BED WITH MY WIFE?

A WOMAN
WHAT RUNS
OUT ON
HER
HUSBAND
AIN'T
FIT!

DID THE
TRAMP
TELL YOU
SHE TOOK
MY SON?



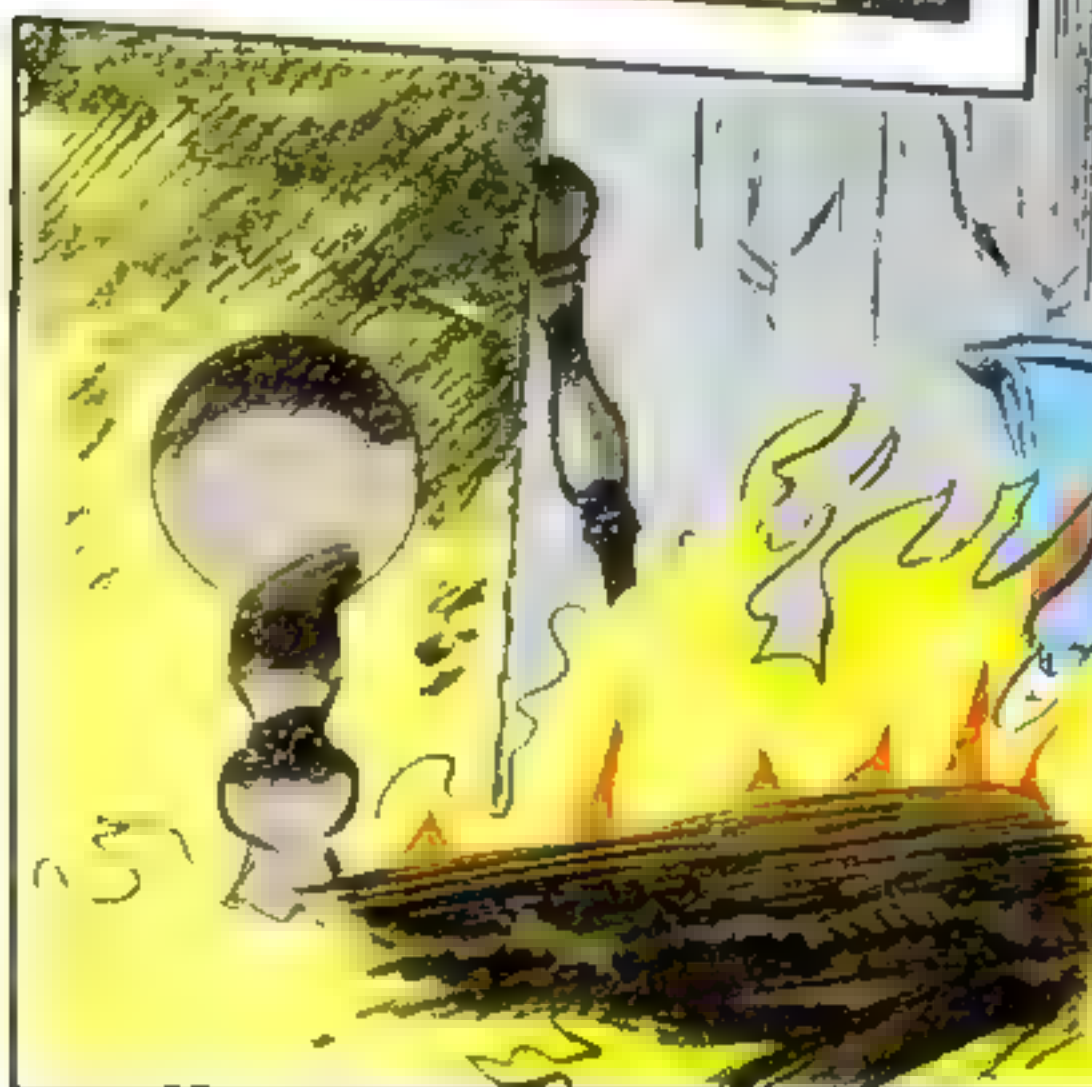
MY ONLY
SON, THAT'S
WHAT THE
TRAMP DONE!

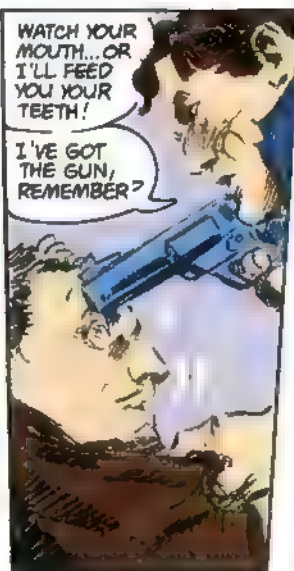
SHE TOOK
THEM FROM
ALL THIS...
AND RAISED 'EM
IN SLUMS...
THOUGHT I
WOULDN'T
FIND HER.



IT TOOK FIVE
YEARS... BUT MY
BOYS, THEY FINALLY
FOUND HER...
FOUND HER
GOING TO BED
WITH A NODDY
LIKE YOU!

WHAT THE HELL
YOU KNOW ABOUT
ANYTHING? YOU
LIVE WITH
ROACHES!





THE BULLET HIT HIM LOW. IT LOOKED LIKE IT WENT THROUGH CADAVER'S KIDNEYS.

I HAD TO GIVE IT TO HIM. EVEN DYING, HE DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING.

HE DIDN'T PROTEST. HE DIDN'T GRUNT. HE DIDN'T LOOK SURPRISED. HE LOOKED LIKE HE HAD INDIGESTION.





I COULDN'T BELIEVE HE'D SHOT COSTILINO, EVEN WHEN THE IMPACT OF THE BULLET SLAMMED COSTILINO INTO ME.

BLOOD APPEARED ON HIS BREAST LIKE A CHARNATION IN FULL BLOOM.



SAY GOOD-BYE, DUSK. YOU'RE GOING TO JOIN YOUR LITTLE FLOOGIE.

COSTILINO TWITCHED SPASMODICALLY MY GUN WAS UNDER HIS AMPLE WAISTLINE.

THERE WASN'T ENOUGH TIME TO LIFT COSTILINO, REACH FOR THE GUN, AIM IT, AND FIRE "BLONDIE" WOULD HAVE EMPTIED THE CLIP IN ME BEFORE I COMPLETED THE SECOND STEP.



I PUSHED UPWARD ON LEGS THAT WERE TREMBLING. I HALF EXPECTED A BULLET TO SHATTER MY SKULL.



AS SOON AS WE HIT THE LINOLEUM HE WAS ON TOP OF ME, LIKE SOME MURDEROUS ANIMAL THAT HAD NO CONCEPT OF MERCY.

HIS THUMBS FOUND THE SOFTNESS OF MY THROAT AND DUG UPWARD INTO MY LARYNX.

WHUMP



HE BECAME A BLOND BLUR BEFORE MY EYES. I COULDN'T BREAK HIS GRIP

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I DIDN'T FEEL THE FLAMES SCORCHING MY FLESH. I WHACKED HIM WITH THE FIERY PIECE OF WOOD, TRYING TO BATTER HIM OFF ME.

HIS HAIR CAUGHT FIRE, AND HE SCREAMED, LONG AND LOUD, AS THE FLAMES REACHED HIS SCALP.

THE PALM OF MY HAND HAD ALREADY BLISTERED INTO A SWOLLEN, BLACKENED FLESH BUBBLE THAT WAS BURSTING WITH BLOOD.

I COULD HARDLY BEND MY FINGERS, BUT I GRABBED THE TABLECLOTH ANYWAY.

I HAD TO STOP THAT INSANE SCREAMING.

I WONDERED IF JOICE HAD SCREAMED WHEN HE'D BEGUN SHOOTING HER.

I WONDERED IF HE HAD KEPT ON SMILING AS EACH BULLET TORE INTO HER BODY AND TOOK HER LIFE.

HIS SCREAM STOPPED ABRUPTLY.

I EXPECTED TO HEAR SOME WHIMPERING. THERE WAS SILENCE.

THE ACRID SMELL OF BURNED FLESH FILLED THE ROOM.

THERE WAS A PART OF ME THAT WAS SICKENED BY THE SIGHT OF RUINED FLESH.



THERE WAS ANOTHER PART OF ME THAT HOPED HE COULD HEAR WHAT I WAS SAYING.

WHAT'S THE MATTER, "BLONDIE"? YOU'RE NOT SMILING ANYMORE.



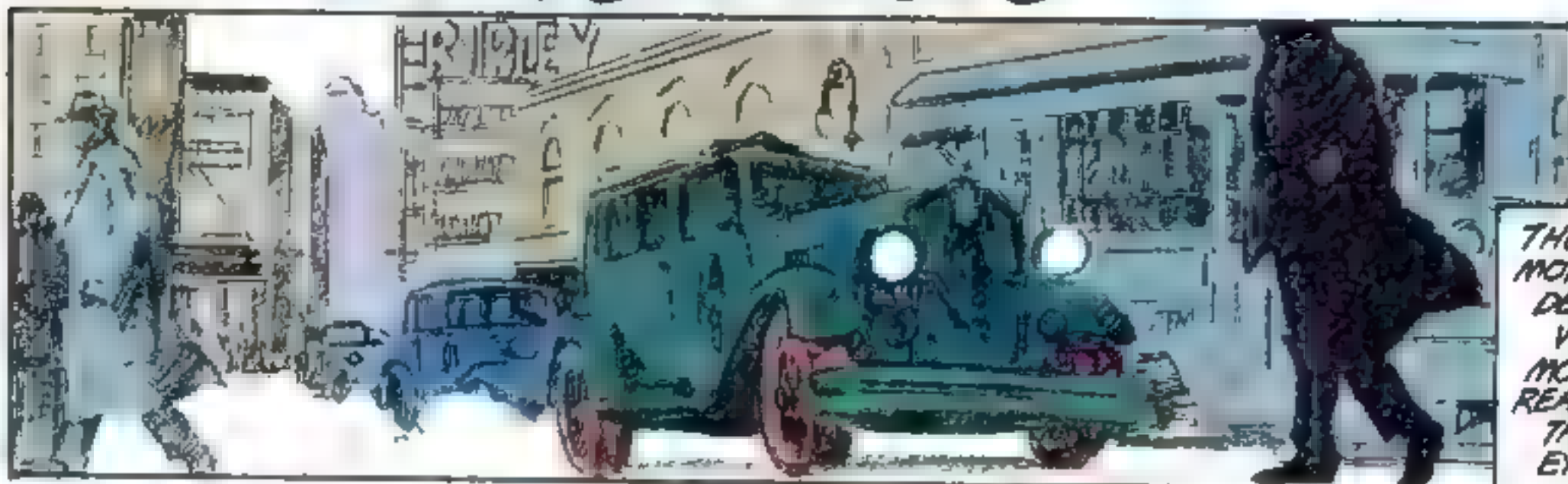
I STAGGERED AWAY FROM THE ROOM. IF I WAS GOING TO COLLAPSE, I WANTED TO BE OUTSIDE WHERE THERE WAS FRESH WINTER AIR.

YOU'VE GOT TO ADMIT ONE THING, BLONDIE. I DO GOOD WORK--

--DON'T I?

EPILOGUE

JENNIE AND ANTHONY SAT BESIDE ME IN UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE. TWO WEEKS HAD PASSED.



THEIR MOTHER'S DEATH WAS MORE REAL IN THEIR EYES.

JENNIE... YOU REMEMBER THAT TIME WE TALKED?

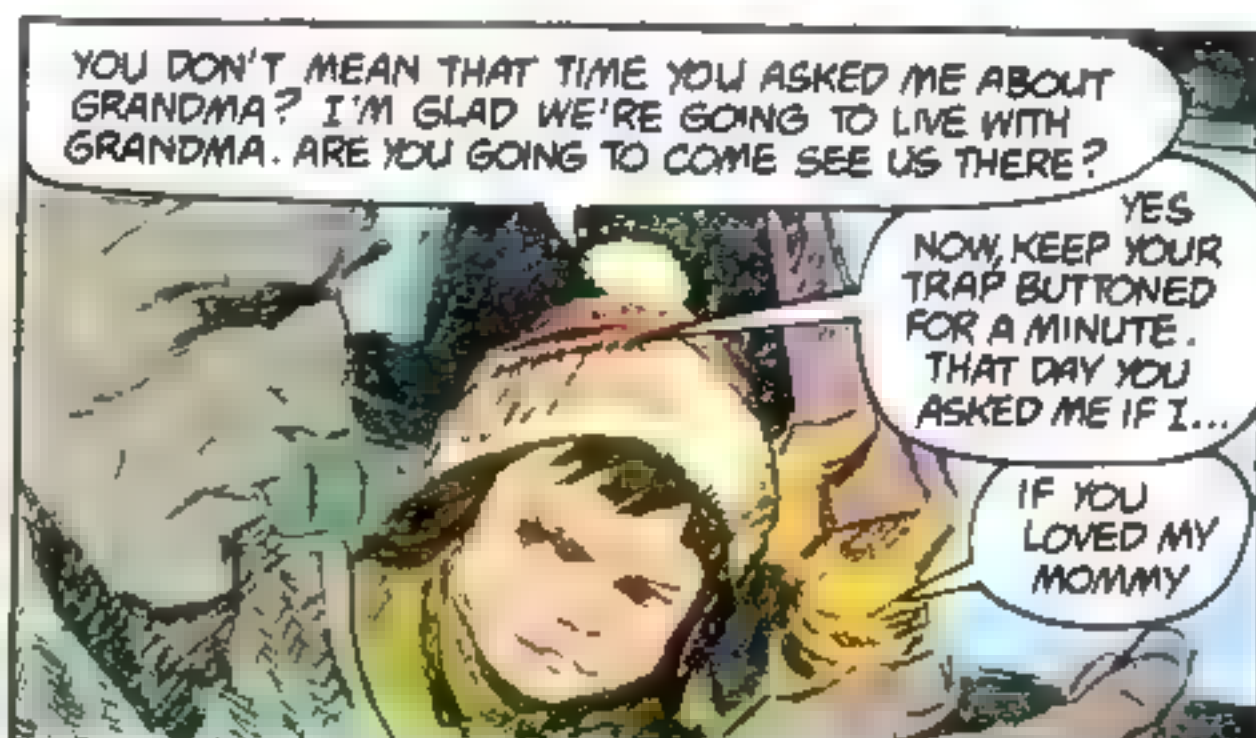
YOU MEAN WHEN THEY... THEY BURIED MOMMY?



YOU DON'T MEAN THAT TIME YOU ASKED ME ABOUT GRANDMA? I'M GLAD WE'RE GOING TO LIVE WITH GRANDMA. ARE YOU GOING TO COME SEE US THERE?

YES NOW, KEEP YOUR TRAP BUTTONED FOR A MINUTE. THAT DAY YOU ASKED ME IF I...

IF YOU LOVED MY MOMMY



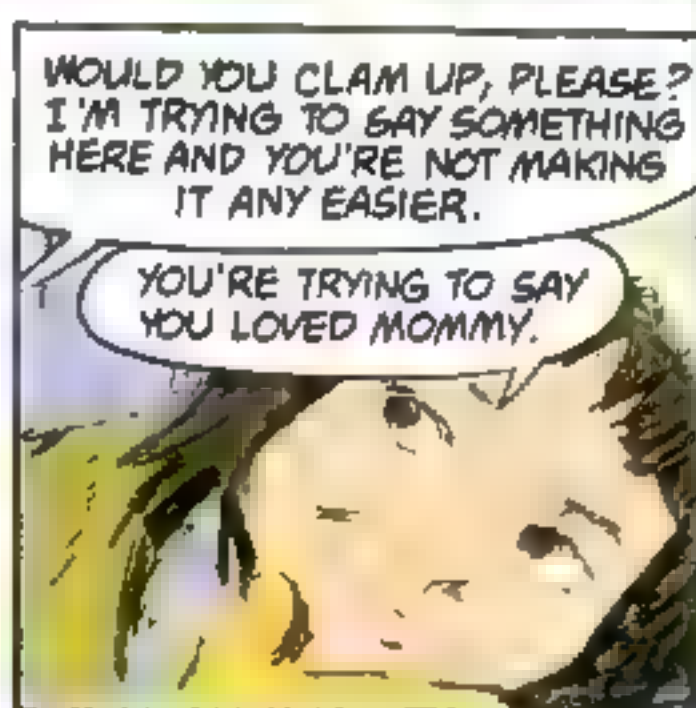
YES... UH... THAT TIME.

ARE YOU NERVOUS?



WOULD YOU CLAM UP, PLEASE? I'M TRYING TO SAY SOMETHING HERE AND YOU'RE NOT MAKING IT ANY EASIER.

YOU'RE TRYING TO SAY YOU LOVED MOMMY.



YES, JENNIE...

THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I WAS TRYING TO SAY.



WHEN YOU ARE DOING A MINI-SERIES that lasts only four issues, there isn't time to wait for critical response after the appearance of the first book. If you did wait, the first batch of letters would be coming in just as you were going to press with your last book.

So, to overcome this situation, I contacted various mystery writers (with the help of Bob Randisi's newsletter for the Private Eye Writers of America) and asked if they'd like to see advance black-and-white photocopies of the first book. I also contacted some of the fine people I knew at *Starlog* magazine, and asked if they'd like to see the first issue of *Dusk*. With the considerable help of Alan Gold, photocopies were sent out to these kind folks, as well as to Ed Hoch at *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*, which reviewed *Dusk* in its

December issue, and to Paul Bishop of the *Thief-taker Journals*, who has included a feature on *Dusk*, on sale in mystery bookstores.

I just want to say a quick "Thank you" to all who took the time to respond. And I hope you readers out there will write in to DC and give your comments about *Dusk*. Both Gene and I would love to read them. And it would give DC further incentive to think seriously about doing a second *Nathaniel Dusk* mini-series. Why, I've already got a title: "Apple Peddlers Die at Noon." You don't want me to have to throw away a title like that, do you? So let us know, please.

And, as I've said in a lot of other places over the years. Be kind to yourselves. Be kind to each other.

And hang in there.

I'm happy to say that *Nathaniel Dusk* successfully adapts the hard-boiled private eye story to comic book form, and is far above normal comic book fare. I wish *Dusk*, McGregor, Colan, and DC a long and successful run.

Robert J. Randisi
V.P./Founder, PWA

Bob is also the author of the *Miles Jacobi Private Detective* series, the second of which, *The Steinway Collection*, is currently available from Avon paperbacks.

Nathaniel Dusk is a very realistic and pragmatic portrait of the private investigator and his less than honorable world. As a private investigator myself, I know only too well what it is to struggle with one's convictions, but unfortunately when it comes to getting the job done and satisfying a client's particular needs on a given case, one has to sometimes, as *Dusk* does, put away one's personal beliefs and convictions and do as another fictional private investigator, Philip Marlowe, once said: "Air other people's dirty laundry because they don't have the stomach to do it themselves."

I think *Nathaniel Dusk* is a triumph for DC comics and its author Don McGregor. They have had the courage and insight to faithfully bring the shadow- and lightlike world of the private investigator to the medium.

Thank you, Don McGregor and Gene Colan, for this realistic rendering of the world of the private investigator.

Scott Mauriello, P.I.
A-Z Investigative Services

I met Scott while I was doing one of the *Nathaniel Dusk* slide shows at one of the comic conventions. There is a special response that you have when you receive a letter from someone who is actively involved in what you are writing about: when I was writing the *Black Panther*, it was a

letter from a black father thanking me for giving his kids a black hero that he felt his children could look up to and it was a letter in response to Detectives Inc., from a lesbian who said the book had given her some hope during a particularly trying time. I felt maybe I had come close to accomplishing what I'd set out to do when I began those books.

In re of *Nathaniel Dusk*: I hate you!

I also hate Don McGregor and Gene Colan for doing what I would've loved to have done and for doing it so well.

As a mystery writer (and ex-comic book letterer), I love the concept of *Nathaniel Dusk* and envy the execution. The writing sparkles and the drawings by Colan are classical. His use of perspective and his style complements McGregor's terse, very realistic writing. Everything comes together beautifully.

You bastards!

But...congratulations anyway!

Andrea Conrad

Andrea, you're the hard-boiledest letter writer of them all, no doubt about it. However, Gene and I love your hate.

I may have your quote that I am "terse" emblazoned on the cover of every book I do from now on, just to infuriate those nay-sayers who would be appalled.

And, in the interests of terseness, I bid you adieu.

As a longtime fan of both creators (I used to marvel at the work of "Adam Austin"—long before I knew, long before he became the pseudonymless Gene Colan), I have been eagerly awaiting *Nathaniel Dusk*. Together and apart, these two men have created some of the most dazzling displays of comic book pyrotechnics in the last twenty years.

I love a mystery as well—and *Nathaniel Dusk* fairly drips the hard-boiled ambiance of Chandler and Hammett. The cynicism reminds me a bit, also, of my favorite detective-type protagonist, John D. MacDonald's world-weary Travis McGee. And overall, it also recalls Humphrey Bogart.

So, in essence, let me simply say thanks for the advance look at *Nathaniel Dusk*. As I have loved their work in the past, I loved this newest collaboration between Don McGregor and Gene Colan, and I love the fact that DC has taken the risk and offered us an offbeat, new, and terrific comic book, *Nathaniel Dusk*.

David McDonnell
Managing Editor, STARLOG Magazine

Dave, I've loved your sincere and long critiques from the past. I still remember your sensitive and compassionate response to Detectives Inc. What can I say here? To compare us to Chandler, Hammett, McGee, and Bogart—gee! I guess I can go to sleep at night from now on without clutching onto that Maltese Falcon. Maybe even without a night light.

Nathaniel Dusk is just about the most exciting project I've seen from DC since Jack Kirby's "Fourth World" books. And, as with Kirby's ground-breaking work, *Dusk* represents another step forward—an added dimension of depth and growth for DC Comics.

I must admit, however, that I am prejudiced, since *Dusk* teams two of my all-time favorite comics talents, Don McGregor and Gene Colan. Their only other collaboration, the "Ragamuffins" strip in *Eclipse* magazine, was a milestone achievement for alternative publications. With *Dusk* they prove that was not a fluke: *Dusk* is unique among CCA titles. The writing is mature and compelling. McGregor handles a well-known and loved genre adroitly and with an absolute minimum of stereotyping. Indeed, as soon as Nate starts to speak, we see that this is no predictable cardboard character. Here is a multifaceted man whom we will have to get to know over time, even if we do sense immediately that he is someone we will like.

Colan is the master storyteller. His ability to evoke mood and tension through an interplay of light and shadow is used here to fully charged advantage. It seems the perfect complement to McGregor's tale of a not-so-hard-boiled New York detective. Both script and artwork ring deliciously true to the period, from the classic framing and dialogue on page one ("You don't become a detective expecting to get rich") to the sensational cliff-hanging climax atop the Empire State Building.

Nathaniel Dusk is not a super-hero story. It is not

horror, fantasy, or funny animals. But it is graphic storytelling at its finest—a seamless blending of art and idea that effortlessly carries the reader down a fast-quicken stream of adventure and intrigue.

There was just one problem with the proofs that you sent: you only sent me the first book! Do you really expect me to wait two months to find out what happens? There's only so much a person can take!

Seriously, I'd like to thank you again for the opportunity to comment on *Dusk*. I salute DC for having the courage and foresight to publish this title. Best of luck!

Howard Zimmerman
Editor/STARLOG Magazine

And here is Howard Zimmerman, one of the best editors in the business. His publishers got real lucky when they snared him.

For our piece de resistance, the following is from Paul Bishop, who puts together the Thieftaker Journals. Paul is a true private eye aficionado, with a vast library of detective fiction. He has worked on the late Mystery magazine, interviewed top mystery authors, and is one of the most charming gents to talk with on the phone.

Nathaniel Dusk, the new private eye hero from DC comics, is pure detective pulp. All the elements that have made the Black Mask school of writing so popular over the years are presented in a format that is eminently readable and visually aesthetic.

Author Don McGregor's respect for the P.I. form, previously displayed in his visual novel *Detectives Inc.*, is readily apparent in the story line's gritty dialogue, 1930's settings, street level characterizations, and complex plotting.

Gene Colan's artwork has an impressionistic flair that displays an inverse sense of action and movement that actually leaps off the page. Complementing Colan's pencils are Tom Ziuko's colors, which, when printed on the book's baxter quality paper, have an eye-pleasing watercolor feel.

With the evidence of *Dusk*'s first two issues in, it looks like DC is on to a winner.

The mean streets have never been meaner, and the traditional private eye knight in slightly tarnished armor never more cynical or alone.

The tone is right; the feel is right. McGregor and Colan have reason to feel proud of their creation. From the *Thieftaker Journals* comes every wish for *Nathaniel Dusk* for continued success.

*Paul, I've thanked you on the phone, and I thank you now for your kind words. If the rest of the audience finds *Dusk* as pleasing as you good folks, maybe there's a good chance I won't have to throw that "Apple Peddlers" title away.* —Don

THE WAY TO GO

WITH CAPTAIN "O"



...LOOKING FOR KIDS TO HELP...

...CAPTAIN "O" OVERHEARS MIKE AND JENNY TALKING.

I'M BORED! EVERYTHING COSTS SO MUCH! WISH I HAD A JOB!

ME TOO! I'D LOVE TO EARN SOME EXTRA MONEY AFTER SCHOOL!

ARCADE PALACE

LYNN HAS A PROBLEM, TOO.

MY BIKE BROKE AGAIN!

HEY JEFF, YOU HAVE A NEAT BIKE! HOW'D YOU GET IT?

CAPTAIN "O" TOLD ME HOW. AND HE CAN HELP YOU, TOO!

CAPTAIN "O" TO THE RESCUE!

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